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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 079981

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [XA](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: SEEKING UN SECRETARIAT BRIEFING ON ZIMBABWE AND
APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL ENVOY

Classified By: IO A/S Brian Hook, Acting, Reasons: 1.4 (b) and(d)

11. (U) This is an action request, see para 2. Department would like to see Haile Menkerios appointed as the UN,s &Special Envoy8 to the Zimbabwe negotiations or at least continue his work as the Secretary General's envoy on Zimbabwe, and for Menkerios to brief the Council as soon as possible. USUN may draw from the talking points in para 3 and the background in paras 4-7 to achieve these objectives.

12. (C) Department requests that USUN:

-- consult with like-minded missions to seek an informal briefing to the UN Security Council by Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios as soon as possible.

-- work with other PermReps to request that the UN Secretariat appoint UN Assistant Secretary General Menkerios as the UN's representative to the Zimbabwe negotiations and dispatch him as soon as possible. If USUN believes that such a formal appointment could face opposition in the Council, we should encourage the Secretariat to continue to use Menkerios as envoy on Zimbabwe.

13. (SBU) Talking Points:

-- The U.S. appreciates the role that the UN has played thus far on the crisis in Zimbabwe. The UN has continuously spoken out on the situation in Zimbabwe, calling the world's attention to the need for democratic reforms and an end to the violence.

--We believe the UN can play an even more important role for the international community by officially appointing UN Assistant Secretary General Menkerios as the UN's representative to the Zimbabwe negotiations, or at least continuing to use Menkerios as envoy.

-- The U.S. believes that a strong UN presence during the negotiations is critical to the success of the negotiations. Menkerios, has already demonstrated to Mbeki, the MDC, and ZANU-PF that he is and will be a strong figure.

-- Moreover, the UN needs an African as its representative in these delicate negotiations between the Zimbabwean parties. The designation by Menkerios of Vladimir Zhagora, a Russian national, as his representative to the negotiations, risks weakening the role of the UN, despite Zhagora,s experience in other African conflict resolution situations.

For use with like-minded missions:

-- The U.S. continues to support addressing Zimbabwe in the UNSC in order to keep the international community,s attention focused on the crisis. An early briefing from Menkerios would be the next logical step. We support

Menkerios' rapid return next week to Zimbabwe, and would like to see him brief the Council as quickly as possible prior to his departure.

Background

14. (C) Mugabe and the MDC have agreed to undertake negotiations toward reaching a political settlement. RSA President Mbeki will continue in his role as facilitator for the talks on behalf of SADC. UN Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios reported July 22 to USUN that Mbeki had intended to be the only mediator, but Menkerios objected. Menkerios told Mbeki he (Mbeki) would be blamed for everything if he didn't expand participation. Menkerios told Mbeki he could not, as sitting president, devote himself full-time to these negotiations but must appoint a team that could work on them full-time. Mbeki agreed to appoint a team of South Africans -- Local Government Minister Sydney Mufamadi, Mbeki legal advisor Mojanku Gumbi, and Mbeki chief of cabinet Chikami -- to be the full-time team that would participate in the Zimbabwe negotiations. In addition, Mugabe and the MDC have agreed that representatives from the AU and the UN will participate in the negotiations as a "reference group" whose specific role is undefined.

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15. (C) UN and AU participation in the talks was an MDC condition for agreeing to enter negotiations to balance Mbeki's bias toward Mugabe. AU Commission Chairman Ping has been suggested as the AU representative, and Menkerios as UN representative. Each member of the reference team -- Menkerios, AU Chair Jean Ping, and SADC rep George Chikoti -- would appoint a representative who would travel to Harare for the negotiations. Menkerios has already named Vladimir Zhagora of DPA, a Russian national, as his representative, and Zhagora has already left for Harare.

16. (C) The negotiations will have only the Mbeki team in the negotiating room with the parties. The Mbeki team will brief the reference team representatives each night and the parties will have access to the reference team as well. When negotiations warrant, the reference team principals (Menkerios, Ping, and Chikoti) and Mbeki will return. It would be even more helpful to the MDC if the AU and UN representatives would actively participate in the negotiations and not be sidelined by Mbeki.

17. (C) Menkerios expects he will return to the region within a week. Menkerios reported to Ban that he (like Ping and Chikoti) could not devote full-time to the negotiations without having his other work suffer unacceptably. Menkerios believes that using him as "SYG Special Envoy" might be useful when he returns to the negotiations. Menkerios said as much to Ban but said that decision of course is up to the SYG. Menkerios has visited Zimbabwe and the region, investigating the electoral situation since the March 29 first-round elections and would be the best choice to serve as the UN participant.

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